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RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH 7254  
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DEPARTMENT FOR PA, NEA/ARN, INR/IC/CD, INR/S:STHIBEAULT AND  
JMCCARTER, VOA NEWS CA, NEA/PPD:CBURGEOIS, DBENZE AND  
AFERNANDEZ, IIP/G/NEA-SA RWINCHESTER  
WHITE HOUSE FOR NSC  
CENTCOM FOR CCPA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KMDR](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [OPRC](#) [SY](#)

SUBJECT: Damascus Media Reaction: Syria/Iran, Syria/Italy,  
Syria/Iraq, Syria/Portugal, Lebanon, Iraq, Palestinian  
Territories (8/25-27)

11. Summary: Syrian papers reported that President Asad received a message from Iranian President Mahmud Ahmadinezhad on developments in the region and bilateral relations, conveyed by

Iranian Assistant Foreign Minister Mohammad Reza Baqeri. Baqeri also met with Vice President Shara and Foreign Minister Mouallem, with whom he discussed the latest developments in the Iranian nuclear file and ongoing contacts on this subject between Iran and both the United Nations and the European Union and the position of Iran as expressed in its response to the European proposals. Talks also dealt with developments in the region and the repercussions of the recent Israeli aggression against Lebanon.

Government-owned Tishreen on (8/26) featured a press statement to the EuroNews Satellite channel by Italian PM Romano Prodi confirming the effectiveness of Syria's role in realizing peace and stability in the region. Prodi restated the need to involve Syria in building peace and stability in the Middle East, asserting that "dialogue with Syria is a significant part of building peace." Prodi said that Hizbollah could be disarmed easily, but within the framework of a political solution for the whole region.

On Syrian/Iraqi relations, papers reported a statement to the Qatari newspaper "al-Watan" by Mahmoud Mashhadani, Speaker of the Iraqi Parliament, praising Syria's firm positions regarding Arab issues, and lauding President Asad's defense of Arab rights. Mashhadani also underlined the impossibility of achieving democracy under occupation, describing such democracy as "false, incomplete and premature."

On Syrian-Lebanese relations, papers featured a statement by the Syrian Ministry of Electricity denying that it had stopped providing Lebanon with electricity, describing such news as an absolutely baseless attempt to destroy brotherly relations between the two countries.

Papers on (8/26) reported that Information Minister Bilal held talks with Luis Amado, Portuguese Minister of Foreign Affairs, on the Israeli aggression against Lebanon. In a press statement to the Spanish newspaper "El-Periodico," Minister

Bilal stressed that the Israeli aggression against Lebanon constitutes organized state terrorism, pointing out that resisting occupation is a legitimate right acknowledged by all international and divine laws. He underlined that Israel must withdraw from the occupied Golan to the June 4, 1967, line and from the rest of the occupied Lebanese and Palestinian territories and recognize the Palestinian people's right to establish an independent state with Jerusalem as its capital. Dr. Bilal said that "the era of the Israeli blitzkrieg is over, and it is time today for victorious resistance against Israel."

End of summary.

## 12. Selected Headlines:

"President Asad receives a message from President Ahmadinejad on the situation in the region and bilateral relations, and discusses developments in Iraq, Palestine and Lebanon with Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Baqeri" (Government-owned Tishreen, 8/27)

"Vice President Shara and Foreign Minister al-Mouallem discuss developments in the Iranian nuclear file with Baqeri, reiterating the importance of boosting coordination to serve stability in the region" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 8/27)

"Iraqi Parliament Speaker Mashhadani: Syria is Iraq's gate; it is impossible to establish democracy under occupation" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 8/27)

"Israeli warplanes continue violation of Lebanon's airspace. UN SecGen Annan arrives in Beirut tomorrow to discuss UNIFIL deployment. Amal Movement and Hizbollah: Facts of victory cannot be ignored" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 8/27)

"Annan confirms: Disarming Hizbollah is an intra-Lebanese issue.

Resolution 1701 does not call for deployment of UNIFIL forces along Syrian-Lebanese border. Israeli violations continue.... Repercussions of defeat threaten Olmert's government. Belgium: The US Administration has lost credibility" (Government-owned Tishreen, 8/26)

"Information Minister in Portugal: He who calls to deploy international forces between Syria and Lebanon does not seek the two countries' benefit" (Government-owned Tishreen, 8/26)

"Syria has not stopped providing Lebanon with electricity.... What happened was just a technical failure" (Government-owned Tishreen, 8/26)

"Four British labor party activities resign.... British MP Starkey declares: We do not support Blair's policy on regional issues" (Government-owned Tishreen, 8/26)

"Italian PM Prodi: Syrian has an important and active role in achieving peace and stability in the region" (Government-owned Tishreen, 8/26)

"Syrian Information Minister Bilal confers with Queen Sofia of Spain and Portuguese Foreign Minister Amado. Bilal: The era of Israeli blitzkrieg is over; it is now time for victorious resistance against Israel. Amado: We will convey the Syrian position to the European Union Foreign Ministers' meeting" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 8/25)

"Israeli Chief of Staff Halutz acknowledges failure. Israeli Prime Minister Olmert is obliged to form an investigation committee. Italian Foreign Minister D'Alima: Resolution 1701 doesn't refer to troop deployment along the Syrian-Lebanese border. Former Lebanese Prime Minister Hoss criticizes the French Position: Inspecting planes in Jordan is an insult to the Lebanese" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 8/25)

"The Arab Group at the Security Council will demand UNSC meeting to discuss the Arab-Israeli struggle next month" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 8/25)

"Two Palestinians martyred in Gaza. Palestinian Deputy Prime Minister al-Shaer refuses to attend an occupation trial"

(Government-owned Al-Thawra, 8/25)

"Two US soldiers killed in Baghdad. Turkish MP: US forces are using chemical and biological weapons in Iraq" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 8/25)

13. Editorial Block Quotes:

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"Their Dreams Are Defeated"

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Muhammad Ali Buza, an editorialist in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (8/25): "Israel continues its threats and violations of the ceasefire in Lebanon....

"Israel does not appear to have learned the lesson of its hostile war against Lebanon and its failure to realize any of its objectives.... Israeli and American comments on the results of the Lebanon war and calls for holding Israeli political and military leaders accountable for their disastrous adventure in Lebanon show the magnitude of the defeat that the American-Zionist plan suffered.

"Despite this defeat, Israel and the United States are still behaving with the logic of the winner who can dictate conditions. It is no longer easy to intimidate and humiliate nations and confiscate their will through brute force, as the price would be too high for Washington and Tel Aviv. Despite American and Israeli domination of the world and its decisions, no one can imagine how a terrorist entity like Israel can coexist with others or be accepted as part of the region's geography...."

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"Meant For Deception"

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Ahmad Hamadah, an editorialist in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (8/25): "The conflicting statements by Israeli and American officials regarding peace in the region send conflicting messages that analysts and observers must work hard to decipher and analyze.

"As soon as Israel's vicious, aggressive war on Lebanon stopped, a number of statements and public positions calling for return to the peace process and for the opening of negotiations with Syria emerged. But at the same time a number of opposing statements were made calling for preparation for a new round of war against Lebanon to achieve the objectives that the first round failed to achieve.

"What is the secret behind this clear and declared contradiction in the political and media positions of Israeli officials and their neoconservative backers in Washington?

"The answer to this important question does not require much thought. Based on the Israeli maneuvers and the deception that Syria knows well from its previous negotiations with Israel, the first thing that one can conclude from such statements is that there is a malicious Israeli attempt to dismantle the strong relationship between the Resistance and Syria....

"What is more important than all this, however, is that Syria understands such maneuvers full well, just as it realizes that true stability in the region basically requires Israel's withdrawal from all the occupied Arab territories to the June 4, 1967 line. Without this, the alleged peace will remain elusive."

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"The Secret of Silence and Ferocity"

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Isam Dari, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen, wrote (8/26): "We do not know why a Lebanese faction and part of the international community remain silent about the repeated Israeli violations of Resolution 1701 and, indeed, about Israel's failure to comply with that resolution....

"The Israeli forces have not withdrawn from South Lebanon as stipulated by the resolution.... Israelis are launching military operations deep into Lebanon on the pretext of preventing the smuggling of weapons for Hizbollah, although this falls under the jurisdiction of the Lebanese Army....

"The Lebanese faction that launched a strong attack on Hizbollah because it abducted two Israeli soldiers did nothing when Israel committed various acts of piracy and kidnapped Lebanese citizens....

"This team is mortgaged to the Israeli plan, and its fate is linked to its fate. We are, therefore, not surprised with all this viciousness, anger, and nervousness, especially after the American plan began to stumble and the Resistance foiled the expectations of those who rebelled against Lebanon and its Arabism...."

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"Price of Ambiguity of UNSC Resolution 1701"  
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Razan Imran, an op-ed writer in government-owned Tishreen, wrote 8/25): "The United States wants the international force that

will be deployed in Lebanon to be part of its war on terrorism, disarming Hizbollah and wresting the victory and any chance for future victories from Lebanon and granting all this to Israel....

France, for its part, agrees that the international force should disarm Hizbollah, but not necessarily through a new Security Council resolution.... While Paris gives itself the right to send 200 soldiers only, on the pretext that it fears attacks on its soldiers as happened in 1983, it also gives itself the right to demand the deployment of thousands of international troops -- not French -- to isolate Lebanon from Syria, on the pretext of preventing arms supplies to Hizbollah....

"They want the resistance, and consequently Lebanon, to pay the price of the ambiguity in Resolution 1701. This is a translation of Bush's remark that 'Hizbollah will realize later that it has lost'...."

Corbin